

Tips on Quitting Smokeless Tobacco and Danger Signs



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Smokeless Tobacco

Chew and Snuff

There are two forms of spit tobacco (also called smokeless tobacco). Chew is a leafy, bulky tobacco sold in pouches. “Chewing tobacco,” as its name suggests, is chewed. Snuff is a finely ground tobacco sold in small tins. Users hold a pinch of “dip” or “rub” between the cheek and gum.

Many people begin to chew spit tobacco when they become involved in sports, thinking it will improve their performance. Scientific evidence shows this is false. Still others begin chewing and dipping long before they learn that chew and snuff can cause oral cancer. They find out just how addictive spit tobacco can be when they try to quit.

Spit Tobacco IS NOT a Safe Alternative to Cigarettes

Like cigarettes, spit tobacco is addictive and can be harmful to your health.

Spit tobacco contains at least 28 known cancer-causing chemicals as well as the addictive drug nicotine. The chemicals can lead to cancer of the mouth and throat. Nicotine can get you hooked on spit tobacco. If you hold an average-size dip in your mouth for 30 minutes you get as much nicotine as you would from smoking 2 to 3 cigarettes.

Spit tobacco can cause gum recession, mouth sores, and oral cancer.

Gum recession – when gums pull away from the teeth – is not only unsightly but can make you vulnerable to decay on tooth roots and make your teeth sensitive. Gum recession is usually permanent and is difficult to repair.

Sores, white patches, and lumps inside the mouth are signs of tissue damage caused by using spit tobacco. Some white patches can turn into cancer over time.

Spit tobacco users are more likely to get oral cancer.

Oral cancer includes cancers of the lip, tongue, cheek, throat, gums, roof and floor of the mouth, and larynx (voice box). Surgery to treat oral cancer is often extensive and disfiguring and may involve removing parts of the face, tongue, cheek or lip. Difficulty chewing, swallowing, talking, and even breathing, can result from cancer and the surgery required to treat it. Oral cancer can spread to other parts of the body quickly. On the average, half of oral cancer victims are dead within five years of diagnosis.

Danger Signs of Oral Cancer.

If you have used smokeless tobacco you should be on the lookout for any of these early signs of oral cancer:

- *A sore that does not heal;*
- *A lump or white patch;*
- *A prolonged sore throat;*
- *Difficulty in chewing;*
- *Restricted movement of the tongue or jaw;*
- *A feeling of something in the throat.*

Because pain is rarely an early symptom, all tobacco users need to have regular dental check-ups.

Besides ruining your health, spit tobacco can ruin your image.

Stained teeth, tobacco stuck between teeth, bad breath, and behaviors such as constant spitting and drooling are a turnoff to other people.

Quitting Spit Tobacco

If you do use spit tobacco and have decided to quit, you need a plan because quitting on the spur of the moment without a plan is harder. The following will give you tips on how to quit dipping or chewing. Spit tobacco is a tough opponent – but it is possible to quit. For more information on how to quit spit, call: 1-800-4-CANCER.

List the reasons you want to quit. These could include:

- *You don't want cancer;*
- *You don't like having bad breath and stained teeth;*
- *You don't like being addicted;*
- *The people around you find it offensive;*
- *You want to lead a healthier life.*

Make a Step-by-Step Plan for Quitting

- *Ask for encouragement from family and friends.*
- *Ask another spit tobacco user to quit with you.*
- *Tell friends not to offer you smokeless tobacco.*
- *Call organizations such as the American Cancer Society for support groups in your area.*
- *Talk to your doctor or dentist about nicotine gum or patches.*
- *Pick a quit date and taper down until you reach it.*
- *Cut back or switch from the higher nicotine brands*

On Quit Day

- *Throw out all your chewing tobacco and snuff.*
- *Change your daily routine.*
- *Stay busy – you could work on a hobby, go to a movie, write a letter, or visit friends.*
- *Make an appointment to get your teeth cleaned.*
- *Exercise to help reduce tension.*
- *Be committed – tell yourself out loud that you don't use anymore.*

Dealing with Cravings

- *Urges to use last only a few minutes. Try waiting them out.*
- *Do some deep breathing.*
- *Exercise.*
- *Call a friend for support.*
- *Find alternatives to spit tobacco. Sugarless gum or sunflower seeds are good substitutes.*

Stick to it and Don't Give Up

- *Reward yourself. You can use the money you are saving to buy something nice for yourself.*
- *If you slip, pick up right where you left off.*
- *Quitting takes practice. Chances of success increase with each try*

If you're not already a user, stay tobacco-free.

Don't experiment.

Spit tobacco is highly addictive – it's easy to get hooked.